

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



COVID-19 Parental Resources Kit – Young Adulthood

Social, Emotional, and Mental Well-being of Young Adults during COVID-19

Updated Sept. 17, 2020 [Print](#)

Resources, by Age Group

[Overview](#)

[Early Childhood \(0-5y\)](#)

[Childhood \(6-12y\)](#)

[Adolescence \(13-17y\)](#)

[Young Adulthood \(18-24y\)](#)

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can affect young adults directly and indirectly. Beyond getting sick, many young adults' social, emotional and mental well-being has been impacted by the pandemic. Trauma faced at this developmental stage may have long-term consequences across their lifespan. CDC's [COVID-19 Parental Resource Kit: Ensuring Children and Young People's Social, Emotional, and Mental Well-being](#) can help support parents, caregivers, and other adults serving children and young people in recognizing children and young people's social, emotional, and mental challenges and helping to ensure their well-being.

Challenges

Change in routines

In addition to other everyday steps to prevent COVID-19, [physical or social distancing](#) is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to this virus and slow its spread. However, having to physically distance from someone you love—like friends, family, coworkers, or your [worship community](#)—can be hard. It may also cause change in plans—for instance, having to do virtual job interviews, dates, or campus



tours. Young adults may also struggle adapting to new social routines— from choosing to skip in person gatherings, to consistently wearing masks in public. It is important to support young adults in taking personal responsibility to protect themselves

and their loved ones.

Employment or educational challenges

Many higher education institutions temporarily transitioned to only virtual courses to help stop the spread of COVID-19. This included the temporary closing of college campuses, prompting the suspension of many



work-study opportunities and campus housing services. Many young adults also lost their internships or practicums, jobs, or wages due to business closures. Having to juggle moving to a new place, spending long hours online completing coursework, and job seeking without the in-person support from peers could be overwhelming for many young adults. It is important for young adults to acknowledge that these extraordinary circumstances may have an effect on their socioemotional well-being, continuity of learning, finances, and professional development. College and university students may reach out to their institutions' career development, learning and counseling services teams for support. They could also reach out to college student-serving organizations, like the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, Excelencia in Education, and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

Break in continuity of health care



Young adults may have avoided seeking health care due to stay-at-home orders and may continue to do so because they fear getting sick with COVID-19. This includes skipping regular health exams and tests—like those done during the annual

physical [check-up](#)—that can help find problems before they start. Additionally, higher education campus closures have impacted many young adults' ability to receive their accustomed health care services on campus. During COVID-19 and always, it is important to promptly seek necessary care. Several [telehealth](#) modalities allow physical and mental health care providers to connect with patients and deliver care remotely. Some young adults may be eligible for low-cost care at county health clinics and federally qualified health centers.

Missed significant life events

Physical distancing can feel like placing life on hold. The truth is that the clock keeps ticking. Birthdays, internships, graduations, living on campus, vacation plans, births, and funerals are just a sample of the many significant life events that young



adults may have missed experiencing during COVID-19. Social distancing and limits to gatherings have affected their ability to join friends and family in person to celebrate or grieve in typical ways. [Grief](#) is a normal response to losing someone or something important to you. It is important to help young adults understand that hosting gatherings during COVID-19 could be dangerous to those who would want to participate. Encourage them to connect and support each other at a distance.

Loss of security and safety

COVID-19 has impacted many young adults' personal finances—for example, due to job loss and lost wages. Economic insecurity is consistently linked to adverse academic achievement and health outcomes. These adverse outcomes and



unexpected college or university closures may affect the ability to consistently access healthy foods, safe transportation, and housing. Mounting economic stressors can also increase the risk for violence exposure. Stay-at-home orders during COVID-19 may have resulted in some young adults being

increasingly exposed to intimate partner and sexual violence, with potentially fewer opportunities to seek help and social support. It is important to cultivate a trustworthy relationship and maintain open communication with young adults, watching for behavior changes that may signal distress.

What can you do?

Recognize and address fear, stress and behavior changes

Young adults might worry about getting

sick with COVID-19, and about their loved ones getting sick, too. Excessive worry or sadness, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, and difficulty with attention and concentration are some signs of stress. Encourage them to practice [healthy ways to cope with stress](#).

Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

- Know what to do if you are sick
- Know where and how to get treatment
- Take care of your emotional health
- Take breaks from the news
- Take care of your body
- Make time to unwind
- Connect with others
- Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations

Help young adults take care of themselves and their community

Taking care of friends and family can be a stress reliever, but it should be balanced with self-care. Young adults can help make their community stronger by [helping others cope with their stress](#), such as by providing social support, and following everyday actions to [prevent getting sick and slow the spread](#) of COVID-19. Being a

good role model is key—if young adults wash their hands often, stay at least 6 feet apart from others, and wear their [masks](#) in public spaces to help protect themselves and others, then their peers are more likely to do the same.

Help young adults stay healthy

Encourage young adults to keep their routine physical checks, as well as their behavioral health appointments. Inspire them to [eat healthy](#), [drink water](#) – instead of sugar sweetened beverages – for [strong teeth](#), [be physically active](#), or learn something new.

Help young adults stay socially connected

During times of increased social distancing, young adults can still maintain social connections and care for their mental health. Phone calls or video chats can help them feel socially connected. less lonely. or isolated.

Conversation Starters

Get immediate help in a crisis and find a health care provider or treatment for substance use disorder and mental health.

Children and youth can be particularly overwhelmed by [stress](#) related to a traumatic event, like the COVID-19 pandemic. They may show stress through increased [anxiety](#), fear, sadness or worry. When children and youth are struggling to cope with stress, they may exhibit unhealthy [eating](#) or [sleeping](#) habits, changes in activity level, [substance use](#) or other risk behaviors, and difficulty with attention and concentration.

Parents, caregivers, and other trusted adults can serve as sources of social [connectedness](#); they can provide stability, support, and open communication. They can also help children and young people express the many different feelings and thoughts on their mind.

Here are some quick ideas for how to get conversations started with children and youth about how they are feeling and what they are struggling with, regarding COVID-19. You don't have to use these exact words – you know best how to speak with your child, adolescent or youth. In addition, how we talk to children and youth varies depending on their age and developmental level.

- COVID-19 is a new disease, which can be confusing. Do you have any questions about it? If I don't know the answer, I can try to find it or maybe we could search for it together.
- People can be angry, sad, or worried when something bad happens. Those feelings can make you feel confused or uncomfortable. Tell me what you have been feeling since the changes started.
- What worries you most about COVID-19?
- Have you been feeling nervous about going back to school because of COVID-19?
- Wearing masks and staying at a distance from others is not something we were used to doing. How do you feel about that?

- When our minds are stuck on bad things, it can be really hard to focus on other things. Have you ever felt this way? What kinds of things does your mind get stuck on?
- Is there anything that you are looking forward to, for when we can connect in-person more safely and return to more normal activities—like a vacation, movie, graduation or playing on a sports team? Tell me about what that might look like!

Some of these conversation starters are used in [Psychological First Aid \(PFA\)](#)   – an approach commonly used among disaster survivors to cope with trauma. PFA can be useful for parents to help children and young people cope by enabling and maintaining environments that promote safety, calmness, connectedness to others, self-efficacy (empowerment), and hopefulness. Remember: It's okay not to have an answer, just being there to listen in a non-judgmental way can be helpful!

Below are some resources to help you learn more about PFA and other tools for parents and caregivers to help children and youth cope:

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network
 - [Psychological First Aid: Field Operations Guide](#)  (2nd Edition)
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Uniformed Services University
 - [Psychological First Aid: How You Can Support Well-Being in Disaster Victims](#)  

Graphics and animations for young people to share with their peers, encouraging one another to practice healthy habits to prevent COVID-19 and take care of their social, emotional, and mental wellbeing. *These resources may be useful for adolescents and young adults ages 13-24 years.*



English
Español



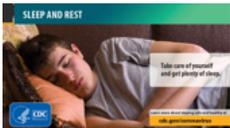
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Young adults may experience [increased stress](#) during this pandemic. Fear and anxiety can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions.

Get immediate help in a crisis

- Call 911
- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish), or text TalkWithUs for English or Hablanos for Spanish to 66746. Spanish speakers from Puerto Rico can text Hablanos to 1-787-339-2663.
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish, or [Lifeline Crisis Chat](#) [↗](#) .
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
- [National Child Abuse Hotline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453
- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or [Online Chat](#) [↗](#)
- [The Eldercare Locator](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-677-1116 [TTY Instructions](#) [↗](#)
- [Veteran's Crisis Line](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or [Crisis Chat](#) [↗](#) or text: 8388255

Find a health care provider or treatment for substance use disorder and mental health

- [SAMHSA's National Helpline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-662-HELP (4357) and TTY 1-800-487-4889
- [Treatment Services Locator Website](#) [↗](#)
- [Interactive Map of Selected Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) [↗](#)

Other Information Resources

CDC and its federal partners have diverse web resources that can help:

- [Coping with Stress](#)
- [Helping Children Cope](#)
- [Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups](#)
- [Grief and Loss](#)
- [VetoViolence](#)
- [StopBullying.gov](#) [↗](#)
- [Youth.gov: Understanding and Coping with Trauma & Building Resiliency](#) [↗](#)

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Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\), Division of Viral Diseases](#)